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L.H.P
2/6/97

From Movie theater to Home theater

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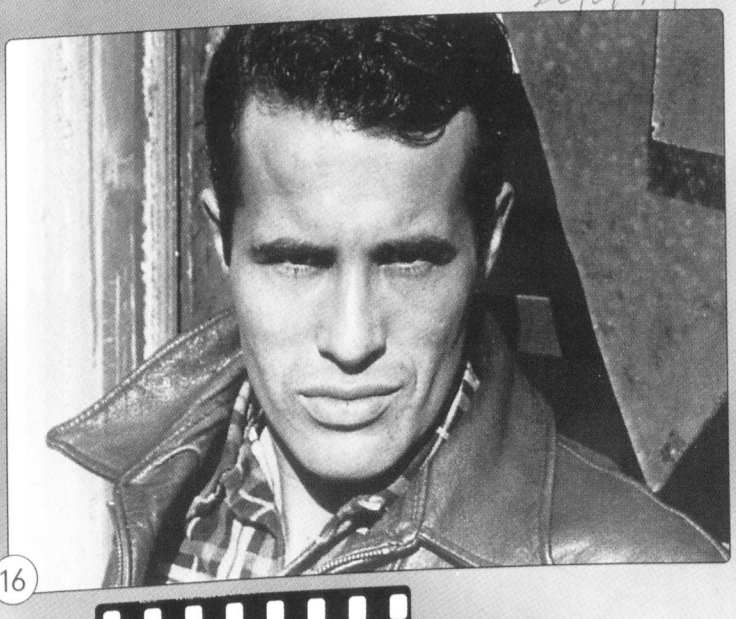
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photo courtesy Photofest.

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photo courtesy Hank O'Neal.

Look back with Kenneth Anger

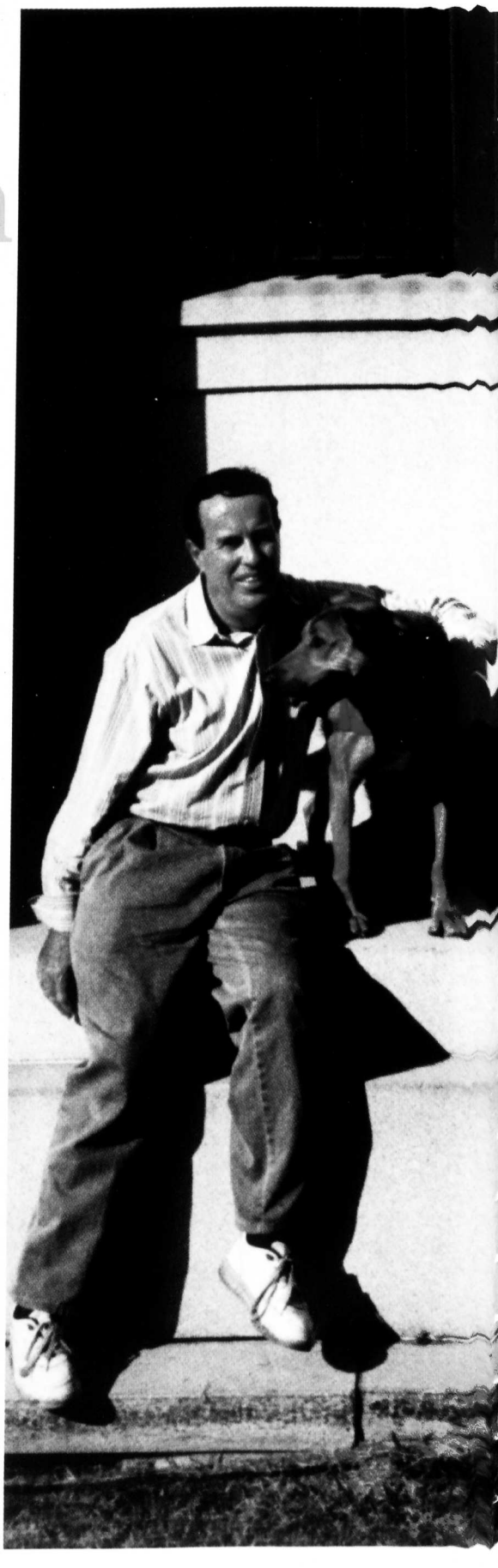
Remembrances from the life of America's foremost experimental filmmaker

by Roy Frumkes

Independent filmmakers work in many forms: features, short subjects, animation, documentaries, and experimental films. And the names of the legends in the field have persisted through the decades to remind us of the wilder creative forces holding court outside the gilded gates of Hollywood. John Cassavetes, Kenneth Anger, Frederic Wiseman, George Romero, John and Faith Hubley—gifted, nontraditional visionaries without whose work the substance of American cinema would be a dull, near-consistent, currency green.

All of the above names made their indelible mark on me, and on my peers. But perhaps none affected me more than Kenneth Anger, when one day in October 1967, I picked up a copy of the *Village Voice* and stumbled across his full-page obituary. At first I was shocked, then puzzled. The dates didn't seem to jive. Slowly I pieced together that the obit had been placed by the filmmaker himself. Asking around, I was told that the negative of his latest film—*Lucifer Rising*—a years-long work of passion and angst, which he'd been carrying around on the back of his motorcycle, had been stolen and destroyed by members of the Hells Angels. Utterly distraught, he had published his eulogy and left the country for good.

Mind you, this was purely unsubstantiated word of mouth, but it was all I had to go on. Many times I recounted it, after screenings of *Scorpio Rising* or others of Anger's experimental works, long after he'd returned to the independent scene with a reworking of the destroyed *Lucifer Rising*—and other personal pieces, as well as the notorious *Hollywood Babylon* books.



Kenneth Anger with Inspector (Rudy Vallee's last dog).
Photo courtesy Photofest.

Such are the rewards of being a film magazine editor. In 1994, I pursued Anger for the Cult Film Issue of *Perfect Vision Magazine*, to no avail. I would have done as well to fling a bottle into the sea. Two years passed, and I was now Editor-in-Chief of *FIR*, thinking about a future issue on the Independent scene. Thirty years had elapsed since I'd read that obit in the *Voice*. I was determined to try again, and with the help of Ray Schnitzer, an old friend of Anger's, I finally established contact.

Films In Review: I'm assuming from what I know about your career that you consciously chose your path rather than go the Hollywood route.

Kenneth Anger: When I graduated from Beverly Hills High School I could have started out at Fox, which was the studio near where I lived. In the mailroom or whatever. But I went to Europe instead. I was offered a job by Henri Langlois at the Cinematheque Francaise. And I was in Paris from the Spring of 1950 until 1962. They were wonderful years because I was able to meet filmmakers, and you can imagine the people who were still around. I got to know Jean Cocteau quite well. I lived on the Ile St. Louis. And every morning, if I cared to go out early, I'd see Bresson walking his dog. I got to know Marcel Carne. Later on I met Truffaut and people like that when they were critics—when directing was just a gleam in their eye.

FIR: You were making films from the early '40s. Were you encountering any opposition to your work before you went to Paris?

KA: No, because very few people saw my films. When they were shown, I had the backing of my grandmother. She bought my 16mm camera for me as a birthday present. It was a Bell and Howell, a good, sturdy camera, and I made some of my early films with it, such as *Fireworks* [1947], when I was 17.

FIR: When I was at Tulane University, I was co-chairman of the Film Society there, and we put together an evening of eight experimental shorts including *Un Chien Andalou*, *Moonbird*, and *the Rites of Spring* sequence from *Fantasia*. A faculty committee demanded to screen the films, and the one they refused to allow to be screened was *Fireworks*.

KA: What year was that?

FIR: 1963.

KA: That's rather retro.

FIR: I had someone get up in front of the audience and announce that *Fireworks* would not be shown, then I locked myself in the projection booth and showed it anyway and got in trouble over it.

KA: That's very independent minded of you, but I'm surprised that at such a late date, even in the South, it could cause such a commotion. It was scheduled at the Coronet Theater when there was a film society there run by the notorious Raymond Rohauer, who later became known as a film pirate extraordinaire. He announced it was in the program and then he chickened out and cancelled it. But I personally never had any run-ins over it.

FIR: *Fireworks* is an awfully knowledgeable and controlled film to have made at 17

KA: It's much easier to do things at that age if you know what you want to do. I was far from naïve cinematically.I had just the minimum of what I needed to do it: I had enough raw stock and I had the camera and I had friends who were willing to help me who had their own costumes because they were actually training to be cameramen for the US Navy. They had the summer uniforms so I said, "Come over in your whites and we'll do the scene," and it was done in one weekend. But thought went into it. I knew I couldn't afford to do 10 takes of something. I had to do it in one or two.

FIR: What films were you influenced by at that time?

KA: I had seen *Blood of a Poet* at the Esquire Theater in L.A. a couple of years before I made *Fireworks*. We had the Gallery of Modern Art, run by Clara Grossman, a tiny gallery up on Hollywood Boulevard. She had a film series every Friday. The prints came from the Museum of Modern Art's circulating film library. The projector came from the Department of Cinema at USC. It was held in a courtyard so small that we had to put the projector outside and project through the open doors. About 20 people could watch. And if it rained, I had to hold an umbrella over the projector.

At that time, 16mm prints were much better. There's been a deterioration of 16mm, and it's hard to get a good black-and-white print anymore. But at that time MoMA had excellent 16mm prints, like all the classic Russian films. We ran those, and the French avante garde, with emphasis on silent films. And we had a piano playing along with them. So that was my education to films that weren't Hollywood.

I remember my grandmother took me to the first film I saw, and I have a very clear memory of it. It was an outdoor screening at the Pacific Palisades. She thought she was taking me to a documentary on Mexico. But what she took me to was the Sol Lesser film, *Thunder Over Mexico*, cut from Eisenstein's *Que Viva Mexico*. And as a child I was riveted by the scene when the peasants are buried in the earth and the horsemen run through and kill them. Even though it wasn't cut by Eisenstein, the images are so powerful. And that whole episode is practically intact.

FIR: *Fireworks* won awards.

KA: It was made in '47, and in '49, just on a whim, I sent it it to a film festival in France called the Festival du Film Maudit, which means the festival of damned film. I think I read it in the trades because it wouldn't have been the

Anger in a *Scorpio Rising* production still.

kind of thing that would have been reported in the LA Times. I air mailed it to Biarritz, France. Europe was in a chaotic, dark state. Rationing and things were still going on. So I figured I'd never see the film again, and I was amazed when Cocteau, who was on the jury, awarded it the prize of Film Poetique. And luckily I'd studied French in Beverly Hills High School and had a rudimentary acquaintance with the language. There was a personal note from Cocteau saying he loved it, and quotes that I've used ever since.

FIR: What was Cocteau like?

KA: He was absolutely charming. But the French are very chauvinist about their language. In other words, they do not speak English. Either you speak French, or forget it. So it was like being dunked into French culture immediately. They would talk and if you sort of nodded and said "Evidement," well, that meant that you understood, that it was obvious. So I listened and picked up all their verbal cliches.

Cocteau invited me to see his apartment in the Palais Royale, which was a tiny little room with walls of red velvet and blackboards where he did chalk reminders of what he was to do that day—he used little drawings. It was charming, and I've never seen photographs of it.

The first people I stayed with were friends of mine from Columbia Pictures who had been in Jack Cole's dance company. They'd been the dancers in all the Rita Hayworth musicals. And they, in protest of the beginning of the blacklist period, said "We're not going to answer any questions." Cause these were guys in their 20s who in the Depression years in New York City, where most of them were from, might have belonged to some kind of youth organization, you know. And membership in these things was now being questioned like it was subversive. So they just quit Columbia and they got an offer to dance in the leading night club of Paris. The owner of the Lido had seen their numbers with Rita Hayworth and said, "If you can do something like that in our nightclub, it'll be a smash." And it was. They were headliners there for two years. So they said, "Anytime you want to come over, you can always stay with us, Ken." And the prospect of free lodging in Paris was quite an incentive.

When Henri Langlois knew that I was arriving he arranged a screening at Cinematheque of the few films that I had made. And this bunch of celebrities came to meet me—Jean Genet, Cocteau, Marais... I couldn't believe that such people would turn out to meet this unknown kid from California who made this little 15 minute film. I soon got used to it and had a delightful time because the relationship with the Cinematheque lasted until Henri Langlois died, which was in the '70s. I actually worked as his personal assistant for my 12 years in Paris.

FIR: How was it, an American, being his assistant?

KA: Basically it was hard work because Henri was a first-class eccentric, though he fed me very well. He got to be very heavy, like Orson Welles. We ate in the best restaurants where, because Cinematheque was a government institution, the restaurants owners in France had an attitude towards culture. "This is a famous artist" or, "This is a famous cultural institution, so of course you can run up a bill here." And sometimes his bill wouldn't be paid for three years. It would actually come up into the millions because he would sometimes be entertaining 12 people for lunch, including Hitchcock and Mrs. Hitchcock. And the restaurant owners were impressed to see these famous people.

FIR: I've just gone from admiring you to envying you.

KA: I think back to those meals. The cuisine was classic French, with all the rich cream sauces...

At an exhibit, he would work day and night for months. He would mix all the colors himself. And often he'd have a whole wall painted, a 20-by-30-foot wall would be painted a shade of mauve and then he'd say, "No, it's wrong." And he'd completely repaint it. The exhibit would get done minutes before the Ministry of Culture and everyone would be there. Then we'd have this frenzy to get Langlois shaved, bathed, and sort of shoe-horned into his tuxedo. If only someone had been able to make a movie of what was going on. And he would look quite presentable except for the bags under his eyes. He wouldn't have slept for about two months. But that's the way he liked to work. He was an anarchist and he would go on these creative binges. It wasn't drugs or anything like that. It was just burning up adrenaline. He died young, of course. He was about 60. I consider that young today. He was very controversial, and the Ministry of Culture tried to fire him

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From *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*. *Photo courtesy Photofest.*

because his finances were what you might call impressionistic. In no other country but France would you have the government putting up with this kind of mad genius.

He had lots of enemies, too. People that were jealous or who felt that he was just a scoundrel. His methods were so unconventional. But he literally loved film. He was sitting on this time bomb. Nitrates were everywhere. He said, "Well you have to love nitrate and then it'll love you back." He said "The thing is, it has to breath." And he was technically right; when they just sit on the shelf and no one opens the cans for years, gasses will build up. If you put an old silent film on rewind and just air it, it helps to get the gas out of the can and aerate the film.

I helped him do this. We had Jean Renoir's first film, *La fille de L'Eau* (*The Girl of the Water*) and it was starting to turn sticky, which is one of the signs of deterioration. It had been tinted in sort of pale green and yellow tones, and the chemicals were starting to go. And he said, "No, no. We're not going to throw it away. We're going to dry it out." He had it up on clothes pins all over the Cinematheque, and it was true, the stickiness subsided enough so that it could actually be run through a projector.

Or course, later on he had a couple of horrendous fires. But this was because hundreds of nitrate films were piled up on a very hot summer day in the '50s in the court to be picked up and taken to San Paulo, Brazil for a retrospective of French films, and the delivery van was late, so Henri and the rest of us went to lunch about a block away. The cans were left sitting there under a glass porte cochere. The noon sun shining through that glass onto the metal film cans resulted in a tremendous explosion. Hundreds of unique prints were destroyed, including the only print in the world of the second part of *Wedding March Honeymoon*. The fire went up 75 feet in the air, a huge column of flame, and Langlois rushed back, but there was no way of saving them. He ran upstairs, where he had the original costumes from *Ivan the Terrible* that had been given him by the Russians. They were in glass cases, and with his bare hands he broke the glass to reach in and save them. He succeeded, but they were covered in his own blood.

FIR: Do you feel that *your* films are adequately preserved?

KA: Well, in 1993 one of my films—*Eaux d'Artifice*, shot in the Tivoli Gardens—was selected by the Library of Congress as one of the only two 16mm avante garde films to qualify for their preservation program. The other 16mm films on the list were big blockbuster features like *It Happened One Night* and *The Godfather*. The other avante garde film was Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon*.

This prompted me to look at my 16mm camera original. It had been developed and washed in a lab in Rome, and apparently they didn't rinse it enough to get the hypo off, and it had begun to fade in spots, similar to what happens with a still photograph it if hasn't been adequately rinsed: they turn brown or yellow. I was chilled to realize that I wouldn't have looked at it except for the Library of Congress's motivation.

FIR: What shape is *Scorpio Rising* in?

KA: That was filmed on reversal ectachrome and it's in good shape. But I'm still concerned about the original on *Eaux d'Artifice*. I keep them in a refrigerated lab vault in Mamaroneck, New York, where the low temperature slows down whatever happens. But my films shot on Kodachrome and Ectachrome, and Kodachrome commercial, on which I shot *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*, show absolutely no sign of fading, and I think I'm extremely lucky. Sixteen mm Kodachrome color is one of the most stable emulsions. It's almost as good as the old threestrip Technicolor. But 16mm has problems just like 35mm does and some of my films are now half a century old. Shrinkage and brittleness are two of the problems.

At this point there was an interruption from someone. Anger excused himself, and while he was away from the phone, I started thinking about Lucifer Rising, *and about the theft of the negative 30 years before.*

Anger at rest amidst his memorabilia. *Photo courtesy Photofest.*

KA: Sorry. But overnight the swimming pool has emptied. It was almost like a flying saucer had come down to have a drink. Luckily it isn't the middle of summer. Often in the morning I just go out and jump in the pool when I wake up, and if I'd taken a flying leap and the pool had been empty...

FIR: Speaking of flying saucers, in *Lucifer Rising*...

KA: I have seen, and very carefully noted, the conditions of several unidentified flying objects. I've never had a close encounter of the third kind, but I've certainly had a close encounter of the second kind: a close view. In 1967, in San Francisco, I saw a glowing disc come out over the Pacific at night. I was with a friend, so it wasn't like I was having a hallucination, and we weren't smoking pot or anything. It was completely silent. No vibration or sound of any kind, and yet it was close enough to see flashing colors inside a kind of room or cockpit. Without discussing it, I told my friend to write down what he saw, and then we compared notes. And we'd seen basically the same thing.

I had another in the early '70s on a train in England. This silver thing hovering quite close. And what annoys me is that when you read a whodunit you want to know in the last chapter who did it. But I don't think there will ever be an answer. Certainly not in my lifetime. I can see the way it's going, and it's not getting any closer to being answered.

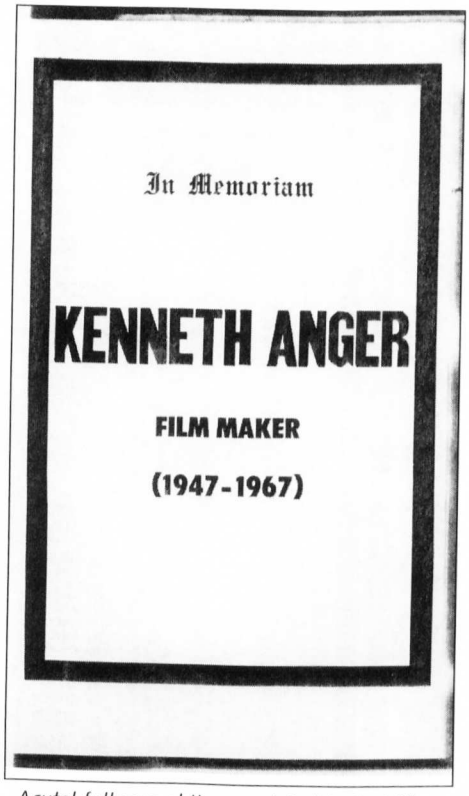
I was angry with *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. It had some impressive effects in it, but the fact that Spielberg would do things like having the craft make a loud humming noise and shake everything to pieces whereas in real life what is so magical and mysterious about these things is that they're totally silent—much more thrilling than sounding like a tremendous powerhouse of machinery.

FIR: You showed a UFO in your remake of *Lucifer Rising*. But your films aren't Ray Harryhausen films, so clearly something else is going on there.

KA: I'd been in Egypt five times before I made *Lucifer Rising*. The first time was in 1950 when Cocteau gave me a letter to deliver to a friend of his, one of the top

Egyptologists. The partner of this archaeologist had been killed, leaving him desolate. They had been working together for 25 years. His name was Baron de Lubitz, and he was the founder of the the The School of Symbolic Egyptology, a theory maintaining that every inch of everything the Egyptians ever built was for symbolic reasons. Cocteau found this absolutely fascinating, and I believed it, too.

Anyway, there's a link between the solar disc, which is very important in the cosmology of ancient Egypt, and the flying saucer. In their stories, the gods are transported on discs. I had a sighting in Egypt quite similar to the one that I re-created in *Lucifer Rising*. The special effect of the saucer was done for me by Wally Veevers.



Acutal fullpage obituary printed in the Village Voice

FIR: Really? Who worked on *2001*...

KA: I described what I needed, and he said, "Well, sure. I have the rostrum and I'll just do it for you in my spare time." He'd been working for Kubrick. It didn't take a great deal of his time, and he was happy to do it for me. And believe me, it was pushing the limits of 16mm. To get a rock-steady image is considerably more difficult than on 35mm because you only have one sprocket per image. I was only lucky enough to make one film on 35mm — *Rabbit's Moon*.

FIR: This is the 30th anniversary of the theft of *Lucifer Rising*, which strikes me as an important moment in the history of experimental film in this country, and I would love to hear the truth about the event.

KA: I began *Lucifer* in San Francisco, where I met Bobby Beausoleil. He was a teenager at the time and a guitarist in a psychedelic acid rock band called Love. He was of the astrological sign of Scorpio and I'm Scorpio rising. He had shoulder-length hair and a very charismatic character and a harem of girls, which is what gave him the nickname Cupid.

We seemed to hit it off well. One day he asked if he could take my van and go down to LA from San Francisco because he had a deal—something to do with his own band. I advanced him some cash and he disappeared with the van, and when he came back, he put these wrapped-up packages in my studio. Eventually I became suspicious and cut open a corner of a package with a razor blade, and there was a compressed kilo of grass, which he had scored somewhere down in southern California, or possibly Mexico, which placed me in jeopardy, not only because he was a minor, but if there was going to be any kind of bust or anything....

I was furious over this, and when he came back I said, "Look. You've betrayed me." He was a very tricky character in my view, very much like the Indian Trickster in American Indian folklore. Anyway, I literally put him outside the door, but he had the keys to the van, and he took it. I said, "Well, we'll worry about the car later."

I went out to dinner a night or two later and he came back and took the film. It was enough for about an hour and a half feature; it was practically finished.

The van he stole from me finally expired on the edge of the San Fernando Valley, and the place where it stopped was right across the street from the Span Ranch. The Span and Iverson ranches are both movie locations, with a lot of recognizable boulders. They've been in dozens of westerns and serials. An interesting location, and a bit eerie. And, as a matter of fact, the Manson family, including Charlie, were holed up in the Span Ranch.

FIR: And Bobby just happened to break down there?

KA: Yes. It's one of those coincidences that, if it were in a novel or screenplay, you'd be pushing it in the coincidence department. But that is how it happened and that is how he got mixed up with the Manson family, because he did move in.

At the time, they were dealing dope and so forth. That's how they were living, as well as from petty theft. A musician had sold some marijuana, a rather large quantity of it, to Manson. And Manson, acting as a middleman, had resold it to a chapter of the Hell's Angels. And the Hell's Angels, when they smoked this stuff out in the desert somewhere, had nearly died.

It turned out at that time that the DEA—the Drug Enforcement Agency—were doing dirty tricks on hippies. They were treating drugs with cyanide, etc. So that if you smoked it you'd get sick almost to the point of expiring. The idea was that it would create a paranoid situation where you couldn't trust the pot, so you wouldn't smoke it anymore. In any case the Hell's Angels got very sick and their girlfriends got very sick. They all turned green, started to have convulsions, and when they got over this enough so that they could make some coherence of their thoughts, a group of them went to see Manson, who said "Well, I got the dope from somebody else." And they said, "Okay. You kill whoever you got it from." So Manson,

being the little chicken-shit coward that he is, chose Bobby and said, "As the newest member of the family..." to test him, I guess, "you go and kill Gary Hinman," who was the musician, living in Topanga Canyon, who was also a Buddhist, ironically, considering that this tainted dope came from him. And so, Bobby, with one of the girls, (Susan, who later became notorious for being involved in the Sharon Tate massacre) killed him, after doing some very nasty things like cutting off an ear, while Gary recited some sort of Buddhist mantra the whole time.

FIR: Good lord.

KA: Bobby was an intelligent kid, but these guys were taking acid, smoking hashish and pot, and dropping pills all at once. They were out of it. Imagine killing someone, throwing the bloody knife in the back of the guy's car and stealing the car—which may have been better than the old jalopy that Bobby had, but... He was caught the next day driving around in Gary's car, with the knife that he killed Gary with still in the back seat, with the blood still on it. He was sent to jail in 1969. He was in prison a month before the Sharon Tate massacre, which was done by a group of the Manson family on the instructions of crazy Charlie. Charlie never did these things himself, but sent his zombies out to do them.

About a month after the reels were stolen, I received a call from a woman and was told I could have them back for 10 thousand dollars. I said, "Well, I don't pay ransom. And I don't have the 10 grand, anyway. So get lost." She said, "Charlie told me to tell you." I didn't know who Charlie was. I never met Manson. To me, they were just crazy hippies. I was getting pissed off at the whole scene. I thought, all these kids, representing so-called flower power, they're all in a moral swamp. They don't know good from bad or up from down. And they're stoned all the time. I was older than they were by quite a bit. I was in my 30s and they were in their teens. That was about the time that the Gray Line tourist bus started to come around, the looky-loos, full of tourists gawking at the hippies, and that was really the end of it. It made them all self-conscious. And then the heroin moved into the scene.

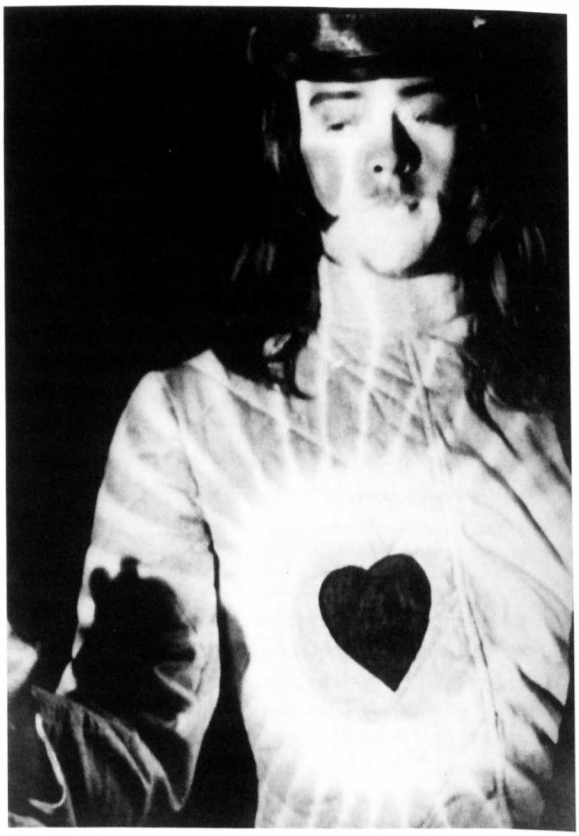
I was crushed when my film was gone. Friends told me to leave California, and in a sense I'd always felt that anyway. If something bad happens somewhere and I can possibly get away from the actual place, I will. So I went to New York, and that's when I took out the ad. I felt I either had to do that or I had to do something very strong to stabilize my inner psyche, because I was in a terrible state. I was actually quite suicidal. And I said, I will kill the artist in me. I won't make any more films, it's over. And I'll do an obituary with a black border, with dates from *Fireworks* to the murdered *Lucifer Rising*. It worked in the sense that I didn't kill myself.

I then went to England and pieced together the scraps of *Lucifer Rising* that had been left in the cutting bin and, just as a joke, showed them to Mick Jagger. And he said, "It's great. I'll do a score for it." And he improvised on the Moog synthesizer for 11 minutes and created my score for *Invocation of My Demon Brother*. And that's how that film came about, culled from the scraps of *Lucifer Rising*.

When I was in England —now we're talking about the early '70s—I was going to give up movie making completely after making one last film. I put everything I had into this new one. I sold my stocks and bonds. I wanted to make a feature. It was conceived like a dance film. The movements and the music would all be conceived at the same time. I basically remade the original using the same title, *Lucifer Rising*, but with a cast including Mick Jagger's brother, Chris, Marianne Faithfull, and my friend Donald Cammell, the director of *Performance*, who played Cyrus. It evolved into something much more interesting. With my connections in London, I got, amazingly enough (I'm the only American who ever did), assistance from the National Film Finance Corporation, which was a (now-extinct) government bank for film projects. They had permission, as a branch of the government in England, to finance artistic projects that weren't necessarily going to bring back their money. They had put up the money for *Under Milkwood* when that was made into a film. I submitted an outline to them, and I got the equivalent of $50,000, which was a considerable amount of money at the time, particularly for a 16mm experimental project.

FIR: I must tell you, it looks like it cost more than that.

KA: Well, it did. It cost twice that because I ran out of



Frame enlargement of a film fragment found after the theft, depicting Bobby Beausoleil as Lucifer in *Lucifer Rising*. *Courtesy Kenneth Anger.*

money, and then Hamburg Television, which at the time had a very enlightened artistic director named Hans Brecht, saw my rushes and put up another 50 thousand. I took six people to Egypt, and we stayed at the Mina House, a luxury hotel right next to the pyramids, and we got a special discount from the government. The Egyptians were, at that time, wonderfully cooperative, plus, because of the connections I had going back to Cocteau, the permissions came. I could hardly believe it. They allowed us to film the Sphinx and actually put Marianne Faithfull on it. Now they're afraid that a little pebble will crumble off of it.

We had a wonderful time in Egypt. We had a lot of not so wonderful things happen, too. I'm not telling secrets: as she wrote in her book, Marianne Faithfull had a drug problem. And I told her, "Marianne, you can't bring anything with you when you come because if they catch you with anything, all of us will be guilty, and we'll either be expelled or thrown in prison…or stood before a firing squad." I think in Egypt it's actually a death sentence. Well, she's a Capricorn. A very sly fox. She put her heroin in the face powder box in her makeup kit. It's gray-white. But her makeup for the film was also gray-white. She was supposed to look dead and dug up. So I used a special ghost pancake makeup first used in *Blithe Spirit*. She was playing Lillith, the first wife of Adam, the spirit of female discontent, which circles the earth like a satellite according to Jewish folklore. She's every bad woman, including Scarlet O'Hara and the Bette Davis characters. They all come out of Lillith.

FIR: What became of Bobby Beausoleil?

KA: He was first condemned to death, and then California did away with the death penalty. It was commuted from being on death row to life in prison. And he comes up for parole every eight years and he's consistently turned down. He's a middle-aged man. And so am I. Only I'm older than he is. I'm getting to where the social security starts to kick in. Luckily, I'm able to look forward to that. I went to prison to see him. He's in a place called Duell Correctional Facility, which is the euphemistic name they give to prisons in California. They're very violent places and they have lethal fights among prisoners—Mexican mafia, the blacks, and the whites. And Bobby belonged to something called the Aryan Nation, and the blacks and the Mexicans are both after him. He got stabbed not so long ago and nearly died. But he's still alive. He's collected a few scars. But oddly enough, once he was behind bars we became friends again. It was a changed relationship, to say the least. And he did the score for the new *Lucifer Rising*.

FIR: He actually did the score?

KA: Yes. Because I was friendly with the head psychiatrist of the whole California prison system. Her name was Dr. Minerva Berthols. She was a great champion of Bobby's, and she was instrumental in arranging for the recording to take place. He recorded the music in prison, with a prison orchestra of 12 musicians, all doing fairly long time. They were given a time sheet, and I was able to show them a work print of the film. Two thousand copies of the LP were sold. And it also came out on a CD, but that's sold out too. I think it's the only experimental film that's ever had a sound track album.

FIR: It's certainly one of the most ambitious experimental films I've ever seen.

KA: I could only do it with friends; if I'd had to pay people like Donald Cammell and Marianne Faithfull salaries, I couldn't have done it. My camerman was Michael Cooper who, as a still photographer, did the cover of *Sgt. Pepper*. And he also did the lenticular 3-D cover for the Rolling Stones for *Their Satanic Majesty*.

FIR: I'd read that Jagger's song *Sympathy for the Devil* was influenced in some way by you.

KA: Jagger had at one point agreed to play Lucifer. It was a verbal agreement. But then he got cold feet. Of course, he was raised in the English church and he started to give me a message, to sport a rather large gold crucifix. And then, shortly after that, he married Bianca. I was furious with him over dropping me. I hate people that say yes and then say no. I don't think *anybody* likes that, but I found it particularly tacky of him to lead me on that way. As it was, he did a bunch of lousy movies, like that horrible thing in Australia, *Ned Kelly*. It was laughable. Ned Kelly is a figure like Billy the Kid. I don't think he can ever go back there. They may have forgotten by now, but at the time they said, "This spindly wimp, daring to play one of our national heroes..."

FIR: And what ever became of the stolen footage from the original *Lucifer Rising*?

KA: At that time, Manson's family was living in a canyon on the side of Death Valley, actually in the place where Von Stroheim shot the last sequence of *Greed*. I learned later that they apparently buried the film there, and if it was buried in Death Valley, where the temperatures get up to 120° in the Summer, the film would have been turned to Fritos. The metal cans may still be there but the film inside would be useless, even if anyone could find it.

a filmography of
KENNETH ANGER

Who Has Been Rocking My Dreamboat? (1941)
7 min., b/w, silent

Tinsel Tree (1941-42)
3 min., b/w, silent.

Prisoner of Mars (1942)
11 min., b/w, silent.

The Nest (1942)
20 min., b/w, silent

Escape Episode (1944)
30 min., b/w, silent; re-edited in 1946 with sound added.

Drastic Demise (1945)
5 min., b/w, silent.

Fireworks (1947)
14 min., tinted b/w, sound

Puce Moment (1949)
6 min., color, sound.

Rabbit's Moon (1950)
released in 1972, and again in 1979 but 9 min. shorter);
7 min., tinted b/w, sound.

Eaux d'Artifice (1953)
13 min., color.

The Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome (1954)
38 min., color, sound. With Samson DeBrier, Anais Nin, Curtis Harrington, Kenneth Anger.

Thelema Abbey (1955)
10 min., b/w, sound; lost film

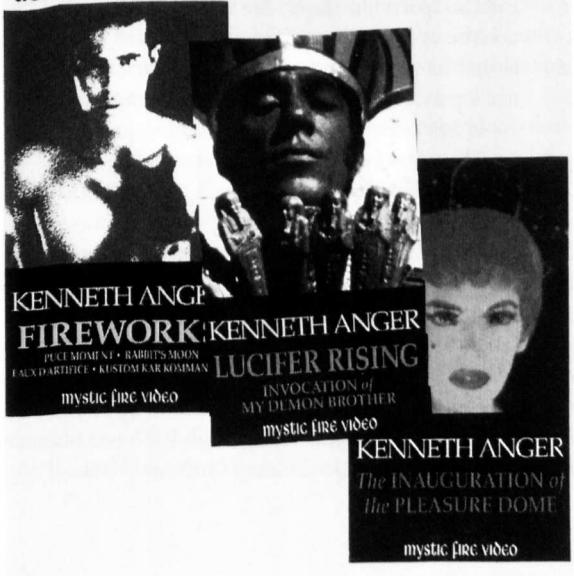
Scorpio Rising (1963)
29 min., color, sound. Music by Bobby Vinton, Elvis Presley, Ray Charles, The Crystals, Gene McDaniels, The Surfaris.Currently out of release, due to music rights problems.

Kustom Kar Kommandos (1965)
3 min., color, sound.

Invocation of My Demon Brother (1969)
11min., color, sound. Music by Mick Jagger. With Speed Hacker, Lenore Kandel, William Beutel, Kenneth Anger, Bobby Beausoleil.

Lucifer Rising (1970-80)
30 min., color, sound. Music by Bobby Beausoleil and the Freedom Orchestra. With Miriam Gibril, Donald Cammell, Kenneth Anger, Marianne Faithfull.

Mystic Fire Video has released a 3-volume collection from Kenneth Anger's Magick Lantern Cycle.



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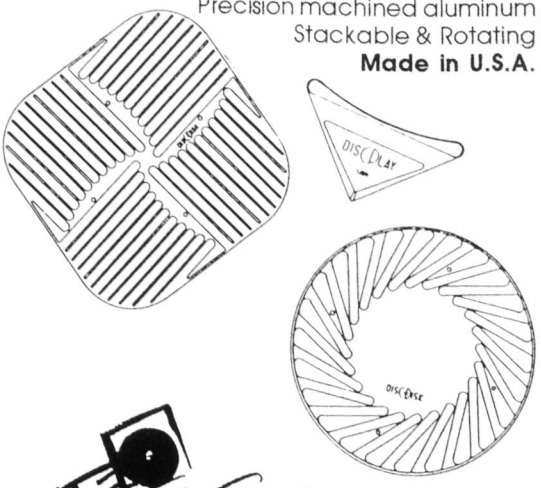

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